

THE CHRISTIAN.

"FAITH COMETH BY HEARING, AND HEARING BY THE WORD OF GOD."—Paul.

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The Christian.

THE CHRISTIAN'S WEALTH.

"Therefore let no one glory in men. For all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." 1 Cor. iii. 21--23.

In the above statement Paul sums up his exposition of the sinfulness and absurdity of division in the Church of Christ, recorded in the preceding part of the epistle. He had shown the brethren that the whole gospel-work was of God, and that however noteworthy were the men engaged in it they were but servants carrying out God's designs; that their labors must necessarily be joint labors with a common end in view; that they were indeed God's fellow-workers, and that consequently they could not consistently be made to antagonize each other. And then showing them that God was so infinitely above men that the wisdom of the world was foolishness with Him, and that He could scan the reasonings of the wise and know their weakness and vanity, He draws this conclusion: "Wherefore let no one glory in men." And then he proceeds to give a further reason for this injunction. It is the wealth of the inheritance with which God has endowed His children.

In the view presented here the Christian is exalted above all the monied magnates of earth. He is richer than the Vanderbilts or Astors, and all because he is a child of God. It is his wealth which we will now consider. Paul's first statement is a general and a sweeping one. "All things are yours." All what things? Is it possible that Paul means to teach Christians—many of whom are poor in this world's goods—that everything belongs to them? Let us see. He specifies. The Christian owns:

I. *Men.* He names some—Paul, Apollos, Cephas. He names those men because the brethren at Corinth had been quarrelling about them. But what he says of them is true of all great and good men. There is not a name that graces the category of earth's heroes but what is included in the title deed of the Christian as a part of his inheritance. Be they what they may, conquerors, law-givers, philosophers, scientists, philanthropists, artists, authors, reformers, whoever in all the past has lifted arm, or voice, or pen to elevate humanity, to add to human comfort or increase human happiness, forms an integral part of that inheritance which God has bestowed on His children. But you ask me, "How is this?" Has the Christian property in the persons of men? Has he control of their liberties or powers? No! No! But what a man is, is not all of man, but what he *does* as well. What a man takes with him is not as much as what he leaves behind. And it is the work and influence of the great and good, the monuments of their existence that the Christian inherits. Paul and Apollos and Cephas belonged to the Corinthian brethren only in that what they did in the cause of Christ was theirs.

They belong to us in the same sense. Paul's life-work is our inheritance. He preached and wrote the Gospel; we enjoy the fruit of his labors. So with Apollos and Peter, and all the apostles. They were all necessary for the development and completion of the truth. We enjoy the completed truth as the result of their joint labors. Paul would enforce, by his teaching, the absurdity of division. One party says, "We are of Paul." Paul would teach them that they have no exclusive right to his teaching or his work. These are common property in the Christian community. Paul does not belong to them more than to others. Neither can they be "of Paul" in any sense in which others cannot be. So we may say in regard to all great and good men. The good which Luther did is common property, and every Christian enjoys it. He unchained the Bible and gave it to the people. All true Christians enjoy a free Bible to-day. The good done by Calvin, Knox, Wesley, and all the Reformers, is common property, and the Christian, because he is a Christian, can claim it as his own. The absurdity then is manifest, of any party claiming exclusive jurisdiction over, and enjoyment of the benefits of any one man's labors. They may adopt his name and his peculiar tenets and thus appear exclusive; but if he developed truth and did good I am heir to that, not as a partisan, but as a Christian, for it belongs to the inheritance which my Father bestows. So may it be said of all the good results of human effort. Did Columbus discover America? The Christian is heir to the advantages of the New World. Did Washington beget a free country? The Christian is heir to its freedom. Did Morse invent telegraphy? The Christian enjoys, by right, the blessings it bestows. There is not a discovery or invention of man that is calculated to lighten human toil, and elevate human understanding, but what the Christian has a perfect right to enjoy its benefits.

II. *The World.* The Christian is a good deal richer than he sometimes thinks he is. I know something of the feeling that is apt to steal over the poor man when in contact with the rich. When he passes their magnificent mansions, brilliantly lighted and superbly furnished, and he thinks of his own humble cot; when he sees them roll by in their handsome equipages, and he walks, weary and foot-sore; when he meets them in their rich apparel and he looks on his threadbare homespun; when he sees their board groaning under the choicest delicacies and remembers his own scanty and coarse fare; when he sees their broad acres, and recollects that he does not own enough soil to cover his body. And his heart sinks within him at the contrast. But there is a bright side to this if he will but look at it. They may have some things which he has not and may never have. But if they are happy, these things do not cause their happiness. Many a person has all these and yet is most miserable. There are other things than money necessary to human happiness, and if they can have them, we can have them too. The pure air and the free and glorious sunshine are more essential to happi-

ness than much money. The inspiring view from mountain-top or hillside adds to the charms of living—yet all those things are free. An upright life and a pure conscience cannot be bought with money—yet there is no happiness without them. These are free to all men. But to the Christian there is something above and beyond all this. There is the assurance that he is heir of all that belongs to God. He is God's heir. Does God own this world? Hear Him tell. "The gold and the silver are mine." "The cattle on a thousand hills are mine." "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof." Then if the Christian is an heir of God, he is heir to all this. Paul says he is a joint heir with Christ; and he says again that God has appointed Christ heir of all things. Then we share His inheritance if we are His. Hence "Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth." I like to feel as I go through the world that I am not on foreign soil. This is my Master's domain and He has made me a sharer in it. I feel as if I had a right here, and a right to use the world, though not to abuse it.

III. *Life.* It is a grand thing to live. To have an "outward man," so "fearfully and wonderfully made;" and an "inner man," endowed with such Godlike powers, is a grand thing. It places wonderful possibilities in man's reach. The Christian enjoys all these. He inherits all life's pains and pleasures, all its disadvantages and privileges. His are the ills of life to refine him, make him more patient while here and more anxious to go over yonder. His are life's pleasures to sweeten his soul and lead him to anticipate the pleasures of the life to come. His are the disadvantages of life to teach him his need of Divine aid; his the privileges of life that he may do his Master's will among men. For all this is he held strictly responsible to God. It is then a solemn thing to live.

IV. *Death.* The Christian don't want to live here forever. He sickens of an existence that at best is full of disappointments and trials. He learns that the brightest earthly prospects fade; the most inspiring earthly hopes perish; the most steadfast earthly friends pass away; the most satisfactory earthly environments change; and in short that earthly experience falsifies earthly anticipation, and he wants to get into some better state. The weary head and heart want rest, and those cannot be had here. Then death is his inheritance to take him out of this state and usher him into another. If "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God," then the Christian is heir to a dissolution that strips him of his flesh and blood, and prepares him to be clothed upon with immortality. It is the gate which, at God's bidding, swings open to let the tired pilgrim pass to his rest and to the full fruition of all his hopes.

V. *Things present.* Here is a grand summing up of all Paul has been speaking about. The present, with all its wealth, is ours. That gives the Christian the range of the entire universe for well-doing.

Things to come. This is the best part of the